

**STATEMENT**

**OF**

**MR. BILL BRIM  
LEWIS TAYLOR FARMS  
TIFTON, GEORGIA**

**BEFORE THE  
U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES AND RISK  
MANAGEMENT**

**MARCH 28, 2006**

Good morning Chairman Moran and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Bill Brim. I am a vegetable grower from Tift County, Georgia. Lewis Taylor Farms is a diversified transplant and vegetable production farm operation. We have 352,000 square feet of greenhouse production space and 4000 acres of vegetable production. Our greenhouse operation produces over 85 million vegetable transplants a year and over 15 million pine seedlings. I also serve as First Vice President of the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.

The fruit and vegetable industry is growing at a rapid pace in the State of Georgia. We are adding jobs and dollars to rural economies throughout the State. But this growth is not limited to our State. Specialty crop growers produce approximately 50% of the farm gate value of total plant agricultural production in the United States

Despite the impact to the U.S. economy, specialty crop growers receive a very small percentage of federal resources aimed at promoting and sustaining efficient agricultural production. I hope the Committee will take a hard look at a balanced farm bill that includes an increased emphasis on specialty crop producers. '

This morning I would like to focus my remarks on several key areas of the farm bill that we hope the Committee will consider during your deliberations in coming the months. A number of fruit and vegetable grower organizations have been meeting to discuss common interests for the farm bill and the results of these discussions will be shared with the committee in the near future.

I am not here today to tell you that our southeastern vegetable industry believes we need a new farm program for vegetables. Although I do believe there are areas of the farm bill that should address issues of concern to our industry.

Of specific interest to me and other southeastern producers are issues related to:

- Restrictions of Planting Flexibility
- Unique Attributes of Specialty Crop Producers
- State Block Grants
- Research
- Nutrition Programs
- Crop Insurance

#### **Restrictions of Planting Flexibility**

This long-standing provision is as a fundamental matter of equity among farmers. As long as some farmers receive direct payments from the government, they should not be allowed to plant crops on that subsidized land that compete with unsubsidized farmers.

#### **Unique Attributes of Specialty Crop Producers**

Due to the nature of high-value specialty crop production, many current Farm Bill programs and disaster programs are of limited benefit to specialty producers due to payment caps, limits on Adjusted Gross Income, limits on off-farm income even if integral to farming operations, etc. We support a thorough review of all farm programs to ensure that specialty crop producers have access to benefits comparable to other farmers, rather than being excluded or limited simply due to a higher-cost of production.

**State Block Grants**

We support an expansion of the State Block Grants for Specialty Crops program originally authorized in the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004, and funded through appropriations in the FY06 Agricultural Appropriations bill. Due to the wide diversity and localized needs in specialty crop production, state departments of agriculture are uniquely able to assist local growers with the specific investments they need to increase competitiveness.

**Research**

Significant new investment in research for specialty crops is desperately needed, through both the National Research Initiative and programs with CSREES and ARS.

**Nutrition Programs**

We support a strong new focus within the 2007 Farm Bill on increasing the access and availability of fruits and vegetables, particularly to children. We support expansion of the school fruit and vegetable snack program, increased commodity purchases, higher allocation to the Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh program for schools, development of a new nutrition promotion program to assist producers in enhancing their markets, and a general requirements that USDA feeding programs and commodity purchasing comply with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines.

**Crop Insurance**

Most fruits and vegetables are not covered by a 'crop insurance' program. We would like to see an increase in pilot projects and studies to determine the feasibility of minor crop coverage.

I want to thank the Committee for giving me this opportunity to testify today. I sincerely hope the next farm bill will address issues of concern to specialty crop producers and reflect the value of their production to the U.S. Economy, as well as the dietary needs of all Americans.

I would be remiss if I did not encourage the Congress to continue to work towards a solution to the guest worker issue for American producers. I realize it is not an issue of jurisdiction for this Subcommittee; however, it is the single most important concern for my business being considered as part of immigration reform in the U.S. Congress.

My farm is just north of here. I want to tell you how much I appreciate and the farmers of this state appreciate your interest in Georgia Agriculture. To have this many Members of Congress from around the country in the heart of our state's farm belt means a great deal to our producers.

Thank you.

**Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Required Witness Disclosure Form**

House Rules\* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2004.

Name: William L. Brim  
Address: 195 Ty Ty Omega Road  
Telephone: 229-382-4454  
Organization you represent (if any): Lewis Taylor Farms

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do **NOT** require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: William L. Brim

\* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: *Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.*

**PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.**

**Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Information Required From Non-governmental Witnesses**

House rules require non-governmental witnesses to provide their resume or biographical sketch prior to testifying. If you do not have a resume or biographical sketch available, please complete this form.

1. Name: William L. Brim
2. Business Address: 195 Ty Ty Omega Road  
Tifton, GA 31793
3. Business Phone Number: 229-382-4454
4. Organization you represent: Lewis Taylor Farms
5. Please list any occupational, employment, or work-related experience you have which add to your qualification to provide testimony before the Committee:  
See attached bio
6. Please list any special training, education, or professional experience you have which add to your qualifications to provide testimony before the Committee:  
See attached bio
7. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list the capacity in which you are representing that organization, including any offices or elected positions you hold:  
n/a

**PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM OR YOUR BIOGRAPHY TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.**

**William L. Brim**

**Lewis Taylor Farms**  
**195 TyTy Omega Road**  
**Tifton, GA 31793**  
**229-382-4454**

William L. 'Bill' Brim was born and raised in Pelham, Georgia. He began developing his leadership abilities while in high school through participation in a number of youth organizations including the Future Farmers of America. After graduating from Pelham High School in 1970 Bill enrolled in Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) in Tifton, GA. Following a tour of duty with the National Guard he graduated from ABAC in 1973 with an Associate of Science Degree in Agriculture.

After college Bill began his agribusiness career, working for several firms before returning to Tifton to pursue his lifelong goal of farming. In 1985, Bill and Ed Walker purchased Lewis Taylor Farms, a well-respected vegetable plant company founded in 1951. With many new production techniques being introduced to vegetable production, Bill realized technology was forcing the traditional old-fashioned bare-root transplant companies out-of-business. Over the next five years, Bill transformed Lewis Taylor Farms to a diversified transplant and vegetable production farm operation. Beginning with only 22,000 square feet of greenhouse production space in 1985, Lewis Taylor Farms now boasts over 352,000 square feet of production space. The greenhouse operation produces over 85 million vegetable transplants a year and over 15 million pine seedlings each year. Lewis Taylor Farms is one of the largest diversified vegetable farms in Georgia with over 4,000 acres in production.

Bill's progressive attitude has not only transformed the production aspects of Lewis Taylor Farms, he continues to strive for innovation solutions while maintaining a high professional level of management practices. In 1998 when the shortage of farm labor intensified even more, Lewis Taylor Farms was one of several farms in Georgia to organize a farm labor association and begin utilizing the H2A program. Lewis Taylor Farms is one of the first farms in Georgia to be recognized as a GAP Certified Farm, a third party food safety certification program with Bill being instrumental in the establishment of the GAP Program. The operation boasts modern packing and refrigeration facilities.

Bill has not only utilized his leadership abilities as President of Lewis Taylor Farms, he has also unselfishly served his community and industry in the following positions,

Tift County Board of Education – Vice Chair and Board member from 1988-1994

Tift County Farm Bureau Board of Directors – 1990 – 2005

Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association

President - 1996-1999

Vice President - 2003-2005

Legislative Committee Chair – 1998-2002

Sponsorship Committee Chair – 1999-2003

National Council of Agricultural Employers

Member of Board of Directors – 1999-2003

Georgia Department of Labor – H2A Advisory Committee – 1995-2000; Chair - 1996-1998

Georgia Agri-Leaders - Charter Member – 1988

Georgia Growers Association (H2A Labor Group)

Member - 1997-2003

Vice President - 1998-2000

University of Georgia – College of Agriculture

Dean's Advisory Council – 1999-2005

Chairman – 2001-2002

Tift County Extension Advisory Council

Bill is married to the former Deborah McAllister and has two married daughters, Jennifer Rackley, 28 and Jessica Kirk, 25 along with two granddaughters Madaline Grace (born July 8, 2003) and Rachel Louse (born January 8, 2005). He is a member of and active in Northside Baptist Church in Tifton.